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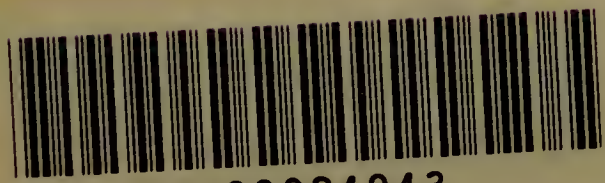
SONGS OF THE RED CROSS  
AND OTHER VERSES



BY  
GEORGE STOKER



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With the Authors compliments and  
Kind regards  
Xmas 1907 George Barker

SONGS OF THE RED CROSS  
AND OTHER VERSES.



By  
GEORGE STOKER

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# SELIM,

AN INCIDENT OF THE TURKO-RUSSIAN WAR, OF 1877-78.

---

TO MY FRIENDS

SIR ROBERT AND LADY BORWICK,

A TOKEN OF AFFECTION AND RESPECT.

'Twas on the Caucasian border, at a place called Chamcharee  
We lay besieged in a marshy camp at the edge of the tideless sea,  
In front was a valiant watchful foe, behind us the stony beach,  
Prolonged resistance seemed hopeless and rescue out of reach.

All round the camp's close limits we'd raised a wall of clay,  
And no one went beyond it, outside 'twas death to stray ;  
And here and there we built stockades, with fascines tough and strong,  
About four yards or so in width, and nine or ten times as long.

And underneath the strongest we'd hollowed a cave with care,  
And all the ammunition we had was guarded in safety there.  
The cave was closed with a narrow door built of rough baulks of wood ;  
A shelving path led down to it, 'twas there the sentry stood.



Our men were sickening by dozens, our food was almost done,  
The brackish wells were nearly dry, so fiercely shone the sun.  
For six long weeks nor night, nor day, had we known either rest or repose  
For Russians had shell'd us from morn till eve, from the sunset till he rose ;

But still we gave no way to despair, but prayed for relief to save,  
And the cheeriest man amongst us all was Selim, the pasha's slave.  
A stalwart nigger was Selim, as e'er in your life you saw,  
Built on a perfect model, with never a single flaw ;

Broad shouldered, thin flanked, straight limbed, quite six feet long he stood  
With tendons tough as iron wires, and muscles as hard as wood.  
His laugh was light and gladsome, he was always brave and strong,  
And oft times he'd cheer our weary hours with his ready wit and song.

For at morn the breeze went seaward laden with many a sigh  
Of brave determined soldiers prepared to do or die ;  
While at eve the cooling sea wind wafted us hope and love,  
And led our thoughts from our earthly cares to the God who watched above.





At dawn on the day I speak of the torrent of shot and shell  
Can be compared to nothing else than a concentrated Hell.  
We fought from the early morning, we were fighting at close of day,  
Our men had fallen by hundreds, but never-a-one gave way.

We fought till our arms were aching, till our rifles were burning hot,  
Till we loaded the cannon with stones from the beach, and used up all the shot,  
Till the men who held the main defence well nigh gave way to despair,  
For all their ammunition was done, and no way to get more there.

The cartridge boxes were heavy, our limbs were weak and sore,  
And the horses that formerly carried such loads, had been eaten days before  
And all that day the foremost man with many a shout and yell  
Fought, the pasha's nigger Selim, like a fiend let loose from hell.

Where'er the Russians were strongest, in the thickest of the fight,  
And shell and ball whizzed by him, he bore a charmed life  
As the sun sank to his slumbers he sent us a last bright ray ;  
“ Cheer up, brave hearts, hope always,” ’twas thus it seemed to say.



And hope, like angel's whispers, sprang with the evening breeze  
That cooled our bodies, nerved our hearts, and gave our spirits ease.  
And each man called upon his God to aid in our distress,  
Instead of blood and death and pain, to give us peacefulness.

And hark! the guns cease firing, no hurtling shell in air;  
Our prayer is heard, we've breathing-time—thank God, we'll not despair.  
'Twas the nigger Selim rushed from the barricade,  
He went to bring ammunition, to the magazine he made;

But close to the cave the pasha stood, with angry glowering eye,  
And he hoarsely bade the nigger stand, as he tried to pass him by.  
“How dare you leave your post?” he cried, “how dare you run away?”  
He forgot how bravely Selim had fought in the thickest of the fray;

And he hurled foul words of anger 'gainst the bravest of us all,  
Who feared not the glistening bayonet, or the whiz of the rifle ball.  
“Away, and guard him well,” he cried, “the morn shall see him die.  
Speak nought, I'll hear you not,” he said, “a coward can only lie.”





The wrong was hardly uttered ere the whizzing shell and ball  
Like a storm of avenging justice around us began to fall.  
One shell came soaring onward, fell and rolled o'er and o'er  
Straight down the narrow pathway that led to the open door.

Then each man knew that death was near, and fled himself to save,  
And the only man that was not cowed was Selim the pasha's slave.  
He burst from the guards that held him, leaped to the open door,  
Seized hold of the burning missile, and bore it towards the shore ;

With fifty strides he'd cleared the camp, why doesn't he throw it away ?  
Good God, why doesn't he drop it, 'twill blow him to bits, we say.  
But no, he reached the sea shore and raised the shell on high  
To cast it into the water, when there came an awful cry ;

It burst with a roar like thunder, on all sides its fragments flew,  
We saw no one for a moment, the smoke obscured our view ;  
It cleared, and here and there, scattered on every side,  
Were the charred remains of Selim, who to save the camp had died.



# FRIENDSHIP.

---

TO MY FRIEND,

LADY NOTTAGE.

Who shares our joy, and even more our sorrow,  
Soothes us in pain, our hours of sadness cheers,  
Faithful and true, for whom there's no to-morrow  
Whom fortune cannot change nor passing years.

Who gives advice, as prudent as it's wise  
Nor fears to wound, but only strives to heal ;  
Kind in reproof, in judgment just and fair,  
And prompt to praise, when praise is for our weal.

Who'd freely sacrifice to help our needs  
And watches close the turns of Fortune's wheel ;  
Strong to defend 'gainst slander and attack  
And face our foes with courage true as steel,





Who never faileth both to speak and give  
The greatest help and solace that can be,  
A wasted treasure when it's still and dumb :  
The Heaven-born, priceless gift of sympathy.

Then ask the "Friend of Sinners," when you pray,  
With all the other mercies He doth send,  
To grant us such as He is to us all :  
An ever loving, true, and faithful friend.



# THE LAY OF A DOWNCAST SOLDIER.

An old soldier, who has braved many dangers, has failed in civil life and is ruined. He is found crying, and is reproached. This is his answer :

“In the days these verses allude to, it was customary for the band to play the troops into action—it was the signal for the fight. When the battle was over—the victors generally played their National Anthem.”

TO

SIR JOHN LANGMAN, BART.,

WHOSE GOODNESS AND GENEROSITY HAVE RESTORED MANY A SICK  
AND DOWNCAST SOLDIER TO HEALTH AND HOME.

I'm a sad and downcast soldier, not very old in years ;  
Misfortune's taken all I had, and I've nothing left but tears,  
I, who marched in the van of battle, where the dead and the dying lay,  
But they never saw me crying, when the band began to play.

I've seen men of many races in many a stern fight—  
I've seen battles noon and morning, and surprises in the night ;  
I've been sick, and sore, and wounded, and hungered many a day,  
Ask my comrades, was I crying—when the band began to play ?

I've been in weary sieges where dread sickness held the field,  
Where brave and gallant soldiers had rather die than yield ;  
I have watched beside those soldiers as their spirits passed away,  
Will you blame me if I shed sad tears, and there was no band to play ?





I've heard victory's yell of triumph at the end of a bloody fight,  
I've heard deep curses of despair amidst defeat and flight ;  
I've heard men and women weeping for the sorrow of that day  
And in sympathy I cried with them, when the band had ceased to play.

I've lost many well-loved friends, many comrades very dear ;  
Men who faced the music bravely, men who never knew a fear,  
Whose friends at home wept sorely, for they knew not where they lay,  
For myself I cried, for in Heaven I know, they'd hear the angels play.

In civil life I've striven, and no effort has been spared  
To gain a name, perhaps some fame, to be with loved ones shared,  
But Misfortune dogged my footsteps and crushed me by the way,  
Do you wonder then, that like broken men, my tears fall fast to-day ?

But the battle<sup>'s</sup> nearly over, all the glamour now is past,  
My days and nights are troubled and I long for rest at last ;  
When pain, and death, and crying, and all sorrows pass away,  
Where for peace, and not for battle, God's band doth ever play.



# THE LAD BEYOND THE SEA.

---

TO THE MOST LOVING AND DEVOTED OF MOTHERS,

A. McG. S.

Sweet Mother, when he turned to thee through all his helpless years,  
You smoothed his pillow, comfort gave, and dried his childish tears ;  
You spun love's thread with golden strands, that binds *his* heart to *thee* :  
A holy bond that holds *you* fast, to *your lad* beyond the sea.

In boyhood's happy careless days, when all was clear and bright,  
You little thought how soon the lad would pass beyond your sight.  
In that sweet time the love you gave grew fonder, stronger yet ;  
A mother's love, of boyhood's years, manhood cannot forget.



And when he grew to manhood's height and reached to manhood's years,  
You realized how soon must fall those bitter parting tears ;  
The prayers you taught, and pray for him, upon your bended knee,  
Mingle with those, half way across, from your lad beyond the sea.

And now think only of the joy when he returns once more,  
In wisdom and in stature grown, but loving as of yore ;  
Till then, and ever, in Heaven, on Earth, wherever he may be—  
There's a faithful friend to guard and guide your lad beyond the sea.





# TOLERATION.

---

TO MY DEAR FRIEND AND PASTOR,  
THE REV. HERBERT ROWSELL.

There's a distant land beyond the grave with many mansions blest  
Where those of every faith and race may find eternal rest,  
And teachers of the various faiths strive now and ever more  
To show the paths that all must tread to reach that happy shore.

There's but one God for every faith, whate'er his prophet's name,  
As Christ and Buddha and Mahomet were, but God is God the same.  
Had we been born of Moslem race, or yet beside a Buddhist shrine,  
Then Buddha's or Mahomet's faith, had surely been both yours and mine.



Shall countless millions quick and dead be held to lasting shame  
For not believing in the Christ that never heard his name ?  
Is this the message He, Himself, from God to man hath brought ?  
Think ye injustice such as this is by a just God wrought ?

Then, seeing colour, race, and faith are accidents of birth,  
Let each man keep his father's faith to guide his steps on earth.  
Let no one seek another's faith to change, or turn aside,  
For *one* destroyed *another* faith can never be supplied.



## THE LAST MARCH.

A soldier and his little girl are supposed to die at the same moment.  
He is killed in battle, and she dies at home in bed.

DEDICATED

TO THE MEMORY OF MY LOVED AND HONOURED FRIEND, THE LATE  
COLONEL EDWARD SAUNDERSON.

How we should live is known to all ; we learnt it at our mothers' knee ;  
'Twas taught with love and sacrifice by Christ on Calvary.  
And how to die is plainer still ; to follow in the steps He trod,  
Be steadfast, true, and murmur not, but march before your God.

In Service ranks and Civil life are found, where'er our flag doth fly,  
Strong men and tall, above the crowd, in knowing how to live or die.  
Men who bring credit to their native race and honour to their native sod,  
When duty calls they never count the cost, and march before their God.

The soldier man had lost his wife, and he was quite alone  
Except one precious little girl, whose heart was all his own.  
He said he'd march before his God whenever his time came ;  
“ Father,” she said, with childish pride, “ I'll march with you the same.”





The news of war arrived by night ; they marched out on the morrow.  
His duty called, he needs must go ; but, oh ! what parting sorrow.  
There was fierce and bloody fighting, and many a brave man fell  
'Midst the whiz of the rifle bullet and the roar of the bursting shell.

He was struck and badly wounded, and fell, fighting, where he died ;  
And just before his spirit passed, “ I see my child,” he cried.  
He murmured not, but smiling, said, as his life blood dyed the sod :  
“ Eyes front ! my darling child, and march with me to God.”

And thus the soldier marched to God, but he was not alone ;  
He met a comrade by the way, “ whose heart was all his own.”  
For as he spoke, his little girl in their distant home lay dying,  
And from those who watched beside her bed, came bitter sobs and crying.

There was a sound of marching music, and soldiers in the street.  
She heard, said, Help me, nursie, dear, and struggled to her feet.  
I'm ready, darling daddy now, then gave a little nod ;  
Two tiny steps she made, and then !—they marched before their God.



# TWICE BLEST.

---

TO

D. B.

WHOSE GREATEST HAPPINESS IS TO TREAD SUCH PATHS.

The noblest work that woman's life can grace,  
Whate'er her station be,  
Is pain and suffering to relieve  
With gentle sympathy.

To tend with patient skill by day,  
And through the silent night  
Bring comfort, ease, and with disease  
To fight a stern fight.

Such is the path that Mercy treads,  
It leads to Heaven above,  
There's nothing like it on this earth,  
Except a mother's love.



# A FREE HAND.

---

TO

THE ROYAL IRISH CONSTABULARY.

WITH MUCH AFFECTION AND HIGH APPRECIATION OF THE  
BRILLIANT SERVICES THEIR COMRADES RENDERED  
TO THE SICK AND WOUNDED DURING THE  
SOUTH AFRICAN WAR OF 1900-2.

The dreary mis-managed Boer War is over and done at last,  
And though I'd rather not recall the sadness of the past,  
Some things are so utterly shameful that it does not do to forget,  
For the sake of those who suffered, of those who may suffer yet.

When you think that good wine and spirits for the import duty were sold,  
That might have saved many a brave man's life, who died from the wet and cold  
You'll naturally ask on whose shoulders rests the onus of this shame?  
If you'll tell me who's responsible, I'll tell you who's to blame.





The Army way, in my belief, from long experience drawn,  
From the General down to the last recruit, is to pass the burden on ;  
And how in all reason and justice can this be otherwise,  
When a free hand is never given to him on whom the onus lies ?

Politicians above the Army, their party above the State,  
Who propose at once to carry on war, and also conciliate,  
And the men of little England, who love at home to stay,  
And decline all risks, on moral grounds, when the band begins to play.

Who dare, to their own dishonour, hurl slanders, false and base,  
'Gainst the Sons of the British Empire, and the bravest of their race.  
They'd raised a small rebellion, which we were sent to quell,  
Twas then the incident occurred that I am about to tell.

I think you'll find it illustrates what I have said to you,  
As it shows, at least, in a medical way, what a free hand may do.  
For four long days and nights there was nothing but torrents of rain,  
And such wet and slush and mud, please God, I'll never see again.



As I sat 'neath a waggon at midnight with a Soudan stove on my knee,  
And for some of my men who gathered round I was making whiskey tea,  
I saw three stalwart dripping forms loom up through the drenching wet,  
And I heard the sound of a manly voice that I never will forget:—

“ This is the Irish Hospital, and you are in charge, I think ? ”

“ It is,” I said ; “ come in, my friend, sit down and have a drink.”

I gave him a cup of our whiskey tea, and of course to the others too.

“ We grow it at home, in bottles,” I said, “ but what can I do for you ? ”

“ I command the Colonial contingent, and we've formed the cavalry screen  
In damndest, 'donggiest' roughest land that ever I have seen,  
And what with fatigue, and wet and cold, all I have got to say  
Is without a drink there are several men will be dead ere the dawn of day.”

“ All right,” I said, “ just wait a bit,” and I called for Sergeant Larry,  
And I bade him give them whiskey in bottles as many as they could carry.  
And I've often heard the Sergeant, with accents of envy and wonder,  
Describe the flaps of the countless pockets the bottles vanished under.



Then the Colonel's voice grew husky, no doubt 'twas the cold and rain.  
“ Good night, and God bless you, Doctor, though we never meet again.  
I've no special reason for knowing, but somehow *I think* it's true,  
That women and children in our dear land are praying to-night for you.”

. . . . .

In Pretoria three months after, as I walked on a dusty day  
I got a slap on the shoulder that took my breath away.  
I turned to face an assailant, but saw my friend instead.  
He grasped my hand, and with kindly smile, in grateful accents said :

“ You're the very best of doctors, and that is certain sure,  
For as you did show, and as my men know, ‘ prevention is better than cure.’ ”  
And again his voice grew husky, no doubt to the dust 'twas due,  
“ *I know* that the women and children at home were praying that night for you.”

And I breathed my silent thanks to God, for the favour he had shown  
In letting me help to save those men, our brothers and our own.



# TRUTH.

---

TO THE BEST AND SWEETEST OF WOMEN,

E. J. McG.

BECAUSE SHE "LOVETH TRUTH AND HATETH A LIE."

There are treasures here on earth, there are gems beneath the wave,  
Corrupting treasures none may carry to the life beyond the grave.  
There's an everlasting treasure that everyone may own—  
'Tis truth, the simple, holy truth, the richest treasure known.

It is not always easy, but its honour's sacred right.  
For truth Christ died upon the cross, and for it brave men fight.  
Then nail it to your banner now in the days of youth,  
And learn what brings man nearest God, is truth, eternal truth.





## TWO CHALLENGES.

On two occasions when playing golf the writer was challenged to compose verses during the round, about the game and players, and repeat them on the last green. The verses were to end respectively with the words "scratch" and "handicap."

### (I) SCRATCH.

TO MY KIND AND RESPECTED FRIEND

KEITH CAMERON, Esq.

One bright day in September, a party started off  
From Deal for Princes Sandwich to play a game of Golf.  
There was Cameron, a Highland gentleman, there—very hard to match,  
He played a good and steady game, but not quite up to scratch.

There was Dalglish, Scotch, and cautious, you'll find it is no catch  
To take him on at evens, unless you're close to scratch.

There was Nevill, strong and sanguine, who deep designs did hatch;  
But his heart and head and golf are good, all nearly up to scratch.

Stoker quoted his own verses, by the yard and by the snatch;  
And, as naturally resulted, he was very far from scratch.  
And what with, match, catch, hatch, and snatch we were a merry batch,  
We passed a happy, sunny day, but no one played like scratch.



## (2) HANDICAP.

TO MY GOOD FRIEND—BUT GOLFING ENEMY—

THOMAS F. DALGLISH, Esq.

Hurrah ! for the breeze o'er the grassy Links, and the whiz of the soaring ball ;  
Hurrah ! for our committee, for they're good men one and all.  
For grumblers and for growlers, they do not care a scrap ;  
But their logic is sometimes in the rough when they make a handicap  
Hurrah ! for the Borough of D . . l and ; hurrah ! for their noble cup,  
That all would like to hold when full, but few could finish up ;  
If you ever see the bottom you'll find you're in a trap,  
For our excellent committee will raise your handicap.  
And what for the awful weather ; the worst that yet had been,  
Hurrah ! for the competition golf, was better ever seen ?  
Hurrah ! for the " final tiers," who for rain don't care a rap,  
Who for this day will gladly pay, with a lower handicap.  
Hurrah ! for the best of out-door games, that old and young can play ;  
Hurrah and hurrah ! for the ladies, what ever else we say,  
They brighten up the prospect, for rules don't care a snap,  
And love a match on the gentlemen's links, without any handicap.













